

State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.1635 | FAX (517) 373.3300

[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/vanwoerkom/](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/vanwoerkom/)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, July 15, 2003

Contact: Kirk Hanna

(866) 305-2134

## State Budget Agreement Reached

*Education remains top priority; no new taxes on Michigan families*

**LANSING** – Republican lawmakers and the governor reached an agreement today on a state budget that places heavy emphasis on education, health care, economic and job development and the environment – without raising any new taxes on Michigan families, Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, R- Norton Shores, said.

“It is nice to see the light at the end of the budget tunnel coming towards us,” Van Woerkom said. “The completion of the budgets this week will provide local governments in West Michigan and around the state with the information they need to adequately make their plans for the coming year.”

Many of the issues fought for by the Republican legislature were agreed upon, including funding to preserve the Merit Award Scholarship at the \$2,500 level, keeping scheduled road projects on track and, most importantly, balancing the state budget without any new taxes.

Among the provisions hammered out by legislative leaders and the governor include:

- Restoring the Merit Scholarship Award so that each student who qualifies will receive the \$2,500 amount,
- Restoring 17 of the 34 deferred road projects that will increase motorist safety and create a viable state infrastructure for the movement of commerce,
- Approving the Driver Responsibility Program and the Claim It Correctly Program,
- Initiating funds for a Governor-Speaker technology partnership that will provide laptop computers to 6<sup>th</sup> grade students across the state. The partnership is possible with the support of federal funds, and
- Creating a funding floor for Higher Education which will ensure all institutions of higher education receive more than the administration’s original recommendation.

Legislators met the challenge of the current budget situation, solved the problems and put money away into the Medicaid Trust Fund, Budget Stabilization Fund and the Education Savings Fund for the Future, Van Woerkom noted.

“The budget priorities outlined today represent a victory for families in Michigan,” Van Woerkom said. “Critical funding for education and road projects will ensure our communities remain strong into the future.”